Joint civil society letter ahead of the European Union-Israel Association Council

13 Feb 2025

In a letter published ahead of the European Union (EU)-Israel Association Council, a coalition of civil society and human rights organisations publish a clear case for the EU to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement in the face of Israel's breaches of international law and call on the European Commission to draft a proposal accordingly. The forthcoming EU-Israel Association Council must address Israel's violation of Article 2 and act decisively to uphold its commitment to human rights and international law. Read the Joint civil society letter on the EU-Israel Association Council below.**Brussels, 10 February 2025.**

Dear Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EC Vice-President,
Dear Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission,
Dear Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security,
Dear Ministers and Council members,We, the undersigned civil society and human rights organizations, express our deep concern over the planned EU-Israel Association Council meeting in February, which is set to take place amid Israel's grave breaches of international law. We urge you to use this opportunity to address the Israeli violations and apply the EU's leverage to bring them to an end.While we welcome the Gaza ceasefire agreement, this development must not serve as a pretext for the EU to resume business as usual with Israel or deepen its bilateral relationship. On the contrary, implementing the ceasefire in all its phases will require significant international pressure on the parties. Addressing Israel's ongoing violations of International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) must be a prerequisite for further engagement.

Numerous reports from UN bodies, the UN Commission of Inquiry, special rapporteurs, and leading human rights organisations have documented Israel's structural policies of forcible transfer, starvation, and deprivation of water in Gaza. Israel has systematically targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, healthcare workers, aid workers, and journalists. Reports also highlight the unlawful detention of Palestinians, including children, and their inhumane treatment, torture and gender-based abuse. Israel is now also implementing legislation aimed at ending UNRWA's operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, despite the EU's repeated opposition to such move. This legislation will have detrimental consequences for the humanitarian response in Gaza, including the EU's, and undermine the provision of basic services such as health and education across the OPT, on which millions of Palestinians depend.

The recent Israeli assault on the Northern West Bank, bombings, mass arrests, and closures across the territory indicate a shift in focus by Israel, rather than a cessation of violations. Illegal settlements continue to expand, with a record number of outposts established in 2024 and additional settler housing units approved almost weekly now. Moreover, the coercive environment created by settler violence and military actions has forcibly displaced at least 20 entire Palestinian communities and led to the killing of more than 800 Palestinians since October 7.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) reaffirmed in its July 2024 advisory opinion that Israel's occupation is illegal, violating fundamental international law principles, including the prohibition of territorial acquisition by force and the Palestinian right to self-

determination. Consequently, the court stipulated the obligation of the international community to bring about an end of Israel's illegal occupation. The ICJ also found Israel in breach of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's prohibition of racial segregation and apartheid. Israel has dismissed the courts' conclusions and has also failed to comply with the ICJ's provisional measures ordered in the South Africa vs Israel case where the court found a plausible risk of genocide being committed by Israel in Gaza.

All these findings were communicated to the EU Member States, as evidenced by the leaked assessment from the EU's Special Representative for Human Rights. Despite the overwhelming evidence, the EU-27 has failed to condemn the Israeli targeting of civilians and denial of humanitarian access in Gaza in violation of IHL.

The continued Israeli violations stand in direct contradiction to Article 2 of the Association Agreement9, which establishes respect for human rights and democratic principles as an essential element of the agreement. Both the EU and the individual Member States, as parties to the agreement, now hold the responsibility to act on the basis of Article 2 and take appropriate measures to ensure compliance with human rights obligations. Giving effect to Article 2 is essential for the EU to maintain consistency with its core principles, obligations under the Association Agreement and previous responses.

Merely raising concerns about Israel's conduct at the Association Council without invoking Article 2 is, judging by past record, unlikely to have any effect. Moreover, engaging with Israeli officials without effectively addressing the Israeli violations would signal the EU's tacit approval and condoning of impunity — a message that will resonate loudly with all those disregarding Human Rights and International Law. The EU must take decisive action to ensure accountability. Failure to do so will not only weaken its credibility but also undermine its strategic interests in the region.

Therefore, we urge you to:

Ensure that Israel's violation of Article 2 is the essential element on the agenda for the upcoming Association Council meeting. If Article 2 cannot be discussed during the council meeting, the meeting should not take place.

Make clear that if Israel does not positively address concerns about its breaches of international law at the Association Council and in its immediate aftermath, the EU must suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

To demonstrate the EU's seriousness, request the Commission to already draft a proposal for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. The proposal should then be approved by member states in case of Israel's continued non-compliance.

Review all trade and other relations between the EU and Israel to ensure that they are compliant with the ICJ Advisory Opinion and the subsequent UN General Assembly Resolution on implementation of the Advisory Opinion.

The momentum for suspension is growing. Over 250 European parliamentarians recently urged the Commission to act, echoing the demands of a coalition of more than 200 European NGOs and trade unions that launched a campaign in September 2024 advocating for the suspension of the Agreement.

We look forward to your response and trust that you will take the necessary actions to uphold the EU's responsibilities and values during the Association Council meeting.

Sincerely,

List of signatories :

1. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH),
2. Human Rights Watch,
3. Oxfam,
4. Pax Christi International,
5. Pax Christi Dt. Sektion e.V. – Germany,
6. CIDSE
7. Defence for Children International,
8. Finn Church Aid,
9. Sadaka – the Ireland Palestine Alliance,
10. EuroMed Rights,
11. LDH (Ligue des droits de l'Homme),
12. La Centrale Générale-FGTB/De Algemene Centrale-ABVV,
13. Fédération Syndicale Unitaire (FSU),
14. Union syndicale Solidaires,
15. European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine,
16. Jewish Call for Peace,
17. European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine – ECCP,
18. Broederlijk Delen,
19. ActionAid France,
20. Pax Christi France,
21. A Different Jewish Voice Amsterdam,
22. Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS),
23. UJFP (Union Juive Française pour la Paix – French Jewish Peace Union),
24. Confédération paysanne,
25. Steirische Friedensplattform,
26. Une Autre Voix Juive – France,
27. Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France (ATMF),
28. Transnational Institute,
29. Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) – Germany,
30. BDS Berlin,
31. International Fellowship of Reconciliation,
32. Financial Justice Ireland,
33. Eurochild,
34. Fundación Mundubat,
35. Pax Christi Flanders,
36. Društvo Orgnizacija za participatorno družbo,
37. Entraide et Fraternité,
38. Confédération Internationale Solidaire et Ecologiste,
39. Peace Institute,
40. Solidarity 2020 and Beyond,
41. Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland (ASCI),
42. Olof Palmes Internationella Center,
43. International Peace Bureau,
44. Finnish-Arab Friendship Association,
45. NWRG odv,
46. POLIFA,
47. Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples (MRAP),
48. CNCD-11.11.11,
49. 11.11.11,
50. Vredesactie,
51. Red Universitaria por Palestina (RuxP),

52.De-Colonizer,
53.Centre for Global Education,
54.PAX,
55.Vrede vzw (Belgium),
56.Collectif Judéo Arabe et Citoyen pour la Palestine,
57.INTAL,
58.The Rights Forum,
59.Kinvara Palestine Solidarity Group,
60.Pingvīni,
61.Humanitas – Center for Global Learning and Cooperation,
62.Belgian Academics and Artists for Palestine (BA4P),
63.Gibanje za pravice Palestincev,
64.Collectif BDS57,
65.Health Care Workers for Palestine – Ireland,
66.SB Overseas,
67.World BEYOND War,
68.Women in Black Vienna (WiBV),
69.Comité pour une Paix Juste au Proche-Orient,
70.Movimento pelos Direitos do Povo Palestino e pela Paz no Médio Oriente MPPM,
71.docp – BDS Netherlands,
72.Parents for Peace,
73.Marcel Stilger,
74.Not in our name Vienna,
75.Palestina Solidariteit,
76.Défense des Enfants International Belgique (DEI),
77.SOS Enfants Charleroi (APEP),
78.Finnish Peace Committee – Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat,
79.Kansainvälinen solidaariruustyö – International Solidarity Work,
80.Plateforme des ONG françaises pour la Palestine,
81.SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations),
82.BDS France,
83.Rete Romana di Solidarietà con il Popolo Palestinese,
84.Plant een Olijfboom,
85.CRID,
86.Sumud – The Finnish Palestine Network,
87.União de Resistentes Antifascistas Portugueses,
88.Partnership Association Bonn-Ramallah e.V.,
89.The Legal Agenda,
90.Américains contre la guerre (AAW),
91.Réseau Féministe “Ruptures”,
92.Global Exchange,
93.Association La Courneuve Palestine,
94.Forum Palestine Citoyenneté,
95.La Cimade,
96.4ACG Anciens Appelés en Algérie et leurs Amis Contre la Guerre, NGO
97.Finnish Development NGOs (Fingo),
98.Association “Lygiai” (en. “Equally”),
99.Academy of Sciences,
100. Center for social research (CEDRA),
101. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies,
102. Femmes Egalité,

103. Lähi-idän opiskelijat ry,
104. “Protests” (Latvia),
105. ATTAC France,
106. Cedetim,
107. Finnish Psychologists for Social Responsibility (FiPSR),
108. Association feministe Apel-Egalité,
109. Association dr Solidarité Inter Peuples,
110. Cppi Saint-Denis [Collectf Paix Palestine Israel],
111. United Against Inhumanity,
112. Féderation des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux Rives (FTCR),
113. Danes je nov dan, Inštitut za druga vprašanja,
114. The Public Committee against Torture in Israel,
115. Focus Association for Sustainable Development,
116. Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice,
117. Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republic of Slovenia (SAZU) resp.
118. KF University of Graz, Austria.
119. Dignity – Danish Institute Against Torture
120. Al – Haq
121. Al – Haq Europe

Source: EUROMED RIGHTS

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